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ABSTRACT

As a land of extreme rural poverty and illiteracy, Bangladesh needs to consciously promote, develop, and support local institutions and participatory leadership, involving local people in the planning, development, and implementation of developmental policies. Begun in 1959, the Comilla experiment constitutes the rationale for institutional planning, emphasizing local planning participation via local organizations, governments, and co-operatives working with governmental agencies that supply training and materials. Depending heavily upon systematized nonformal training programs, the Comilla experiment identified, trained, and educated natural rural leaders to act as change agents. Bangladesh's formal education system has traditionally emphasized the humanities, producing "gentlemen" contemptuous of labor and virtually unskilled. As the biggest institutional framework in Bangladesh, the formal school system has a great potential for providing basic education at the primary level and for "vocationalizing" secondary education. However, the immediate needs of literacy and production suggest that Bangladesh focus upon a strategy for nonformal education that includes: multisectoral community action programs; decentralized planning and implementation; a national policy to coordinate activities; integrated development; self-reliant financing; maximum use of existing institutions and resources; research and evaluation; and target specific priorities. (JC)

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RURAL EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH - PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

M. Haque

A contribution to the IIEP Seminar on "The planning problems in rural education"
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Before we try to size up the problems relating to planning of rural education in a country like Bangladesh, we should try to have a quick look at what Bangladesh is. The problem of planning of rural education and training, both formal and non-formal, faces formidable obstacles due to a set of complex factors.

Rural development problems in Bangladesh sometimes look extremely difficult due to lack of literacy, training and education, linked up with poverty and lack of resources. But these problems are not really insurmountable. The experiments of 'Comilla model' and policies adopted on those bases have played a large part in framing strategy for rural development, including areas of rural education.

I. WHAT RURAL BANGLADESH IS

Before presenting the concept and present status of the Comilla experiment and how teacher education and curricula could accelerate or hinder developmental processes, it would be relevant to have a brief view of what rural Bangladesh is. Recently, Muhith summed it up succinctly in a position paper on 'Rural development in Bangladesh'.

Bangladesh is a land of extreme rural poverty. The per capita income in Bangladesh is about $63 per annum. Ninety-four per cent of the population of Bangladesh is rural in character. Fifty-seven per cent of the Gross Domestic Product is accounted for by agriculture which employs approximately 85 per cent of the labour force. In a small area of 55,000 sq. miles, there are 73 million people. Population density per sq. mile is over 1,350. There are about 22 million acres of land which are under cultivation. The average size of a holding is less than 2.5 acres. The "inequities of landlordism which characterise so many rural societies in the under-developed world" really do not exist in Bangladesh. "But the general paucity of landholding drives a large number of cultivators to rent land from the bigger farmers in order to ensure their survival." Approximately 10 per cent of the farmers may be classified as surplus farmers. And they have holdings above the size of 7 acres. About 70 per cent of the farmers are owner-cultivators and 20 per cent represent the landless group of cultivators. Barely 18 per cent of the total cultivated area are tilled by other than its direct owners. Along with land hunger and poverty, there is a very low level of education. Only 22 per cent of the population can

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be termed literate. The pressure on land is great but agricultural productivity is very low. Application of chemical fertilizers is about two-thirds of a nutrient ton per 1,000 acres. Pesticides cover only 15 per cent of cropped area. Irrigation covers barely a million acres of land. Double cropping is practised in only 30 per cent of the cultivated area. The yield per acre of various crops is one of the lowest in the world. Rice yield per acre is only half a ton. Social and economic infrastructure is even below the rudimentary stage. "The sum total of private property equals public squalor." Rural unemployment is endemic. Economists infer that it is at a level of about 30 per cent.(1)

We have also to remember that strategy for national development in Bangladesh has to emphasise and underline the problems of the rural areas. For attacking rural problems, the available and/or potential institutions in the rural areas have to be utilised. There are three major rural institutions in Bangladesh:

(1) The local government system: Beginning from the age old institution of village 'panchayats' and running through the gamut of local boards, union boards, thana councils and district/zillah boards/councils.

(2) The co-operative system: Mainly agricultural co-operatives. Traditional ones and new co-ops generated through the Comilla's experience. Some weavers/fishermen's co-ops, other professional and very few marketing co-ops.

(3) The school system: Old-time 'tolls', 'pathasalas' and 'maktabs' have mostly been replaced by a tiered feeder levels of education basically shaped by the British in India. Primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and a few institutions for technical education.

Major programmes for rural/national development need to be based on institutional planning in Bangladesh situation, for providing a stable, long-term institutional framework for rural development processes.

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(1) Rural development in Bangladesh, position paper by A.M.A. Muhith, Additional Executive Director, World Bank, 1972.

II. CONCEPT AND RATIONALE FOR INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING

There has been growing realisation among planners that planning for economic development should consider the society in its totality. Planning should be comprehensive, viewing the parts or sectors of the society (social system) as organically inter-related. Empirically tested social science theory points to the fact that modernisation and growth in the economic sector cannot be achieved or sustained without simultaneous modernisation of other sectors of the society like the family, polity, health, education and the value system.

Another realisation has been the shift of emphasis on institutional planning from technical physical planning. Institution means the patterned human relationship, an organisation of the society serving a purpose. Production - agricultural or industrial - takes place within the framework of human social relations. Research on development has shown that investment of money capital from external or internal sources becomes inconsequential, at times even deleterious, if the institutions of the society in terms of cognition, norms and values are not conducive.

Institution-building could be achieved in a number of ways. Government bureaucracy could be expanded on a rationale of specific programme requirements up to various levels, or by conscious encouragement of the development and growth of local organizations and institutions promoting the role of local leadership, or by evolving a pattern in which governmental efforts through specific programmes are made with the conscious participation of local institutions of the rural people. It is an accepted fact now that no effective long-range development can take place speedily enough if the people for whom a particular measure is intended, consciously participates in it in an organised manner. The divergence between the traditional concept of 'dual societies' where the government is at the dispensing end and the people at the receiving end in the climate of a 'government by benevolence', with the emerging 'modernising societies' where effective, conscious and increasing participation by 'the rising mass of the nation' through local organizations have by now been brought into sharp focus.(1)

(1) Edgar Owens and Robert Shaw, Development reconsidered - bridging the gap between government and people, Chapter 1, Laxington Books, 1972.

Institutional development in the context of an economically underdeveloped society becomes crucially important because traditional institutions often put constraint on large-scale adoption of technological innovations. While the technical plan or programme may be developed on the assumption of high level of adoption, in actual reality both the level of adoption and rate of efficiency may fall far below expectation, if institutional planning is not made along with technical planning.(1) Experiences of developing countries, including Bangladesh, are replete with such actualities when programmes failed to rise up to the targeted goals and expectations.

Many development models applied in the developing countries assumed that the development in Asia, Africa and Latin America would essentially be a repetition of the development in the 19th century in the West. The relevance of using Western history in formulating development policies in emerging countries has been seriously questioned by now.

Apart from these considerations the socio-political and cultural milieu of the developing country has to be taken into consideration while planning for development. The need for and contribution of local viable organizations in accelerating the process of development have been demonstrated in many developing countries, both socialist or otherwise. To achieve goals of democracy and socialism, the people's participation through their own organizations in governmental plans have to be effected in a large measure.

Democracy is not successfully operative through periodical national elections alone. For an effective democracy, there must be 'little democracies' functioning within, in the form of local government institutions, co-operatives, school system, professional associations and myriads of elective and participatory processes. Planning itself as well as its implementation has to be a two-way process. Constantly acting and reacting on each other are the central government on one side and the local institutions and organizations on the other.

Another important point has to be kept in mind. In the traditional concept of community and rural development, the government's eagerness to help the rural populace sometimes border on over-governance. The impatience

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(1) S.A. Rahim, Section Chief, Rural Institutions, Planning Commission, Bangladesh, Occasional paper on 'Institution-building for agricultural development'.

and eagerness to bring the expected change and improvement in performance lead to the creation of multi-farious extension agents and supervisory personnel appointed by the government. If India, for example, tried to provide one agricultural extension agent per village, she would need three times as many agents per 1,000 farmers as there are in the Western countries or Japan. It is doubtful even if the United States of America is rich enough to provide different kinds of technically-trained people needed for development. If such development is organised around individual villages, this approach does not take into consideration the crucial role of the population in bringing about change for themselves. Greater reliance is made on the governmental effort. In Bangladesh, where past history of paternal government is long, such efforts may lead to disastrous consequences, with unbearable burdens on the governmental exchequer.

The need, therefore, is to consciously promote, develop and support local institutions with local participatory leadership and involve them in the planning, development and implementation of developmental policies and measures. Performance and leadership are significantly related to responsibility and involvement. No programme with assumptions of mass participation can achieve a reasonable degree of success if people do not involve themselves in it, and organised public participation is only possible through institutional normative involvement.

III. THE COMILLA EXPERIMENT

The Comilla experiment started with the Village AID Academy at Comilla in 1959 later renamed as the Pakistan Academy for Rural Development with Dr. Akhtar Hamid Khan as its dedicated and pioneering prime mover. The Academy, under him sought to move away from the normal prevalent theoretical approach by and tried to evolve a strategy for rural development based on action-research. Whatever has to be done for the rural people must come out of their felt needs, their own capacity to plan and administer, and with supporting services from the Government. In fact, the strategy evolved was a pragmatic participatory process between the rural people through their own organizations in the form of local government institutions and co-operatives, and the governmental agencies through provision of training, extension and input supplies.

One of the major findings of the Academy, which has been accepted as a basis for national and local planning, is the thana as the focal point for rural development. A thana in Bangladesh is an administrative unit with about an area of 100-150 sq. miles and a population averaging about 150,000.

Another suggestion which provided the thana with a functional developmental administration was the Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC) where the thana level local government unit availed of the new set of thana level officers of what are called the 'nation-building departments' of the government. They actually became the teachers and teacher-trainers through weekly meetings and classes held by them for village leaders and model farmers. TTDC is based upon the premise that training perforce has to precede development. And there must be available in the rural areas such well-dispersed training centres for dissemination of innovations and techniques, particularly in a situation where written words could be followed by a small segment of the population.

There was a three-fold gain in this approach, firstly, planning and administration for rural development are decentralised and brought closer to the people in an effective institutional framework; secondly, the linkage of co-ordination of both planning and implementation of developmental efforts by the local institutions through their participatory process gave it a much higher capability to forge ahead than it was ever achieved through centralised planning process; thirdly, the rural areas for the first time received effective priority, not on paper but in reality, and could make a dent in the urban-industrial oriented planning for development dominating so far.

In addition to developing these models for institutional framework, the Comilla experiment also contributed three complementary programmes:

(1) The Rural Works Programme (RWP).

(2) The Thana Irrigation Programme (TIP).

(3) The New Co-operative Programme through Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).

(1) RWP: Apart from creating job opportunities for landless and near landless farmers in villages, RWP was to help the development of the physical infrastructure of drainage and irrigation as well as farm to market roads. It also created the base for planning and development at the grass roots.

(2) TIP: The concept of controlled irrigation during winter through excavating/re-excavating channels and provision of pumps, tube-wells through organised groups helped the expansion of HYV at an accelerated rate. This also had a built-in local participation and co-ordination mechanism relying heavily on local initiative.

(3) IRDP: Organising small and medium farmers to take fuller advantage of the innovations and new inputs in the purview of the fragmented landholding in Bangladesh became the major focus of the co-operative institution-building

programme under IRDP. Gradual self-reliance and insistence on local resource mobilisation underlined the framework of a forum which would initially be directed to boost up agricultural production, release the overwhelming majority of small and medium farmers from the clutches of money lenders and traders through an organised credit system and was expected to be the former's institution for self-reliance. This could be used also as a forum for bringing other desired changes in marketing, processing, rural industries, family planning, education, health, etc.

All these programmes were in fact complementary and were designed to provide the co-ordination framework for macro-planning with micro-level planning and execution. While the local government set-up supported by the thana secretariat of officials headed by the C.O. (development) would provide the political and civic organization of rural people, the two-tiered co-operatives in the village societies and their supporting thana federation would provide the nucleus for the development of the rural economic institutions. Hopefully, there would be a Thana Education Board, to draw the resources of rural educational institutions into the planning and execution process of rural development activities. RWP and TIP would provide the infrastructural and input requirements.

RWP started in 1962 all over Bangladesh along with nuclei of the new TTDC, the new symbol of the focus on rural development. For a few years, it worked quite well, then from 1967, onwards, gradually politics took a priority over development. The major emphasis shifted from drainage, irrigation channels and embankment to dirt roads which are easier to plan and handle, but the infrastructure continues to offer a base to the newly-planned local government institutions at thana level and below to give it a bias towards irrigation drainage. In fact, the First Five-Year Plan of Bangladesh underlines the proposed shift towards overwhelming emphasis on irrigation and drainage through RWP. It would also provide storage facilities in rural areas in support of the rural co-operatives.

The TIP has prospered tremendously since its extensive replication in 1967. In the wake of the damaged and dislocated economic infrastructure of Bangladesh, there is increasing demand for more pumps, tube-wells, irrigation channels and its supporting training activities. Dislocated communication network seriously jeopardized supply, service and maintenance of these irrigation machines and supply of other inputs, but the number in use is steadily rising. The new local government bodies are expected to remove the current co-ordination constraints.

Akhtar Hamid in his Tour of twenty thanas(1) has ably summed up the succeeding vicissitudes under which the Comilla Co-op system was replicated gradually over the years. Seven thanas in Comilla were taken up in July 1965, and next September a war with India broke out. Its expansion to 13 more thanas in Comilla district in October 1968 was attended by a mass upsurge against the then regime culminating in its downfall and corollary effects on development administration. On the eve of IRDP's emergence as a national programme, the liberation war broke out resulting in an unprecedented death and destruction. But these new co-operatives have survived and are gearing themselves up for heavier loads. Expectations from these co-ops as a useful framework for re-building Bangladesh and ensuring its prosperity is also rising.

Most of Akhtar Hamid's observations in January 1971 on the field positions of RWP, TIP and IRDP TCCAs are perhaps still valid with some deterioriation in the planning and execution of RWP due to long-term absence of local government bodies and its concomitant lack of co-ordination. There is a great demand for TIP thought, at present it is functioning under heavy odds. And the new Comilla Co-operatives are fighting to overcome the disastrous effects of the liberation war. Its replication by IRDP in 139 new thanas since liberation (in addition to 23 existing thanas) has generated sizable enthusiasm in various areas of Bangladesh and in re-building its economy. It is hoped that the phased elections to the new local government system will eventually put back RWP on the rails with its desired emphasis on irrigation drainage, and making TIP more effective through local and national level co-ordination which would provide the necessary complementary support to all these programmes for rural development in Bangladesh.

The concept and rationale for institutional planning in Bangladesh as mentioned in Section II has received most of its validity from the Comilla Experiment itself: Comilla's pragmatic approach and its protesting before large-scale replication, along with its emphasis on local planning and participation remains the base for rural planning. Comilla Experiment and its precepts continue to be the base for rural development policies in Bangladesh.

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(1) Dr. Akhtar Hamid Khan, Tour of twenty thanas, PIRD, Comilla, February 1971.

The institutional linkage between the government's anxious desire to promote development in the rural areas with the local institutions as leader participants provides the potential for accelerated rural development in Bangladesh.

IV. NON-FORMAL APPROACHES TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The new institutions and programmes developed for the rural areas like the Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC), Rural Works Programme (RWP), Thana Irrigation Programme (TIP) and Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) heavily depend for their success on education and training of the rural populace through a systematic and non-formal weekly training in the case of TIP, IRDP and periodical training for RWP. Each irrigation group or village co-op would send to the Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC) two representatives, an elected manager and an elected model farmer, who would go back and narrate to members of their village co-op or group what they have learned from their subject-matter teachers at the thana centre (who are actually thana officials of various government agencies and departments).

Problems of agriculture would tend to dominate a village group trying to learn the miracles of HYV coupled with irrigation, fertilizers and pesticides. But the Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC) teaching would expand into areas of health, family planning, horticulture, adult education, etc. The main idea is to identify 'natural' rural leaders, train and educate them so that they could act as 'change-agents' from within, rather than get 'imported change-agents' from outside because experience tells us that the credibility and effectiveness of trained village leaders is more than those of paid extension agents sent by the government. In any case, resource constraint limits the possibility of employment-deployment of a large army of extension men in the rural areas by governmental agencies. Even if it is possible, for a long-term stable approach to national development, it is not desirable to do so, because it saps the local initiative and hinders community's participations. In the new co-op system of Comilla as reflected in the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) this training and education forms a vital part of the strategy through sustained member education.

Member education: The idea behind member education scheme is that the farmers have to be given lessons in the modern technologies for improving farm production with the help of institutional credit. Under this scheme a regular weekly training class is held in the Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC) where the services of the experts of all the nation-building departments are available. The village co-operatives themselves select their model farmers and the managers who are trained at the Thana Training and

Development Centre (TTDC) by various experts of the nation-building departments. A nominal training allowance is given to the managers and model farmers to meet the cost of travelling to and from the thana headquarters.

At the village level regular weekly meetings of the village societies are held where attendance of all members is compulsory. In these meetings, the managers and the model farmers are the teachers of the general body of members. The managers and the model farmers talk about what they learned in the Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC). The general problems of the members as well as the societies are also discussed and solved by the members themselves. The holding of these training classes and weekly meetings has very far-reaching consequences. The farmers who are generally illiterate can learn much in the improved methods of production practised in the advanced countries through lectures as most of them are illiterate and written material would hardly be useful at this stage. Education and training of a member has to be supported by supply and services or linkages with supervised production.

Curricula for development: Training materials and teachers' manuals for the weekly training courses were developed through action-research at the Comilla Academy, later supported by similar materials produced by various related agencies. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) has developed/distributed a large number of them, including teachers' manual on rice, etc. and farmers' brochures on rice, potato, vegetable cultivation, poultry farming and so on. Some samples of these have been presented to this workshop.

Formal school system and Comilla: Apart from these, Comilla also experimented with primary schools to act as a base for teaching innovations and for demonstration to the village farmers. But this was done only in the laboratory thana of Kotwali. One teacher from each primary school was brought to the Comilla Academy and trained so that he could act as an additional change-agent in the village. The school, its teachers and students would grow vegetables, develop habits of thrift, saving and banking, run small shops by students for their supplies, and generally support rural development programmes and activities. This system has so far not been replicated elsewhere, but the results so far in the pilot project are encouraging. The prevailing conventional education system did not seem to be either much bothered or encouraged by this experiment. From 1974, some attempts have been made in Comilla and elsewhere to bring in secondary schools/colleges and their teachers and students, mainly to demonstrate HYV and vegetable cultivation.

V. FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM AND RURAL/NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The foundation of the present education system in Bangladesh was laid down by the British, with a strong emphasis on the humanities. It culminated in a process leading to the 'production of gentlemen'. This had two debilitating effects on the economy and the society. It encouraged the feudal tradition of contempt of labour which reduced the quantum of newly-trained skilled labour into the market so vital for its rapid harmonious development, thereby restricting the growth of employable skills. It produced 'gentlemen' certificate/degree holders in large numbers, gentlemen who wanted 'office jobs' and refused to be manual factory workers, for whom society had little need, and who gradually became a burden on the development of the economy rather than a tool for its progress. It hardly encouraged vocational/technical education so vital for all-round development of the economy. It hardly ever created a sense and a need for national/rural development amongst students and teachers and actually contributed towards situations opposed to it.

The formal school system could hardly instil in its participants the need for growth and development of new consciousness in their own ability to perform and achieve. The system actually degenerated mostly into a repetitive mechanical system of rote learning, and at times, by copying, nor can it achieve the realisation of the national need for the development of institution to achieve more equitable distribution of incremental income which Bangladesh is committed to translate into reality through its major socialistic goals.

But the system itself is quite large and widespread by now. There are 46,000 primary schools, 37,000 of which are managed by the government, about 8,000 secondary schools, 600 colleges and 6 universities. On the engineering/technical education side, there are 1 engineering university, 3 engineering colleges, 19 polytechnics and 50 vocational training institutions.

There are more than 300,000 teachers in these institutions, of which 156,000 primary teachers alone belong to the government payroll.

Student-populationwise:(1)

Primary school students	- 7.75 million
Secondary school students	- 1.95 million
College students	- 0.05 million
University students	- 0.035 million

(1) Source: Education in Bangladesh, DPI's Publications, 1974.

Education has the biggest institutional framework in the rural Bangladesh where on average, one-half village has a primary school and two high-schools per union.

In addition to these there are 2 institutions for educational research, 6 teacher-training colleges Thana Training Centre (TTC) and 6 colleges of education and 47 existing Primary Training Institutes (PTI).

But education has to serve its role as a long-term agent/vehicle of change. The totality of efforts must not only contribute towards increase in production, agricultural or otherwise, but also assure a better quality of life to the rural masses. If the past attitudinal constraints of education towards conscious participation in the mainstream of development could be overcome, the formal school system has a great potential as a tool for rural development in Bangladesh.

VI. EDUCATION AS A CHANGE-AGENT IN RURAL TRANSFORMATION

Education has to be conceived and realised as a long-term intermediary for change in the rural transformation process. The present trend of mass general education system has to be reversed in favour of vocational and technical education, education in employable skills, and education for increased effectiveness in work and production. Recently submitted Education Commission Report also emphasises on this aspect and stresses on 'vocationalising' secondary education rather than their continuance as dispensers of paper certificates.

Training in agriculture: Certain policies have already been adopted by the government. In the Primary Training Institutes (PTI), primary school teachers are being given special block lessons in agriculture during their one-year training period. Special short courses on agriculture were also run for them in Primary Training Institutes (PTI) to expose more of them towards this useful knowledge and more important, get them involved. More than 12,000 teachers have been trained with UNICEF support and the effects have slowly started becoming apparent with primary school vicinity growing improved vegetables/crops with their teachers and students, and serving as demonstration plots for the villages. Teacher's manuals have been prepared and distributed.

A one-year special certificate course in agriculture (Certificate in Agricultural Education) for secondary school teachers is run by the Bangladesh Education Extension and Research Institute: BEERI (so far known as Education Extension Centre). They have so far trained 148 teachers in the course and through a short course have by now trained 738 school teachers. Plans are

afoot to introduce lessons/special course in agriculture in the curriculum of the teacher-training colleges also.

The need for setting up agricultural polytechnics have been recognised. Teaching in employable skills for rural areas would be taught. This is in the preliminary stages of planning.

Health/nutrition, etc.: It has also been decided that Primary Training Institute (PTI) curriculum should also include intensive courses on health/nutrition, population-education, and other issues which are important for rural transformation. Groundwork in this regard has already been started and from the batch of teacher trainees starting in July 1975, they have begun with intensive care in Primary Training Institutes (PTI). Similarly, curriculum for secondary school teachers are being subjected to scrutiny to ensure their becoming useful change-agents for the community, apart from being a good teacher.

Population-education: The two major problem areas confronting Bangladesh are: (a) agriculture and (b) population. The need for population planning is being increasingly realised and a multi-dimensional attack on population explosion has been started. The Ministry of Education has drawn up a Population-Education Programme (PEP) through its formal school system from classes 4-14, which envisages training of teachers, revision of curriculum on population-education, and its phased intensive introduction in all school colleges over a period of five years. The scheme is expected to be launched very soon. Funds have been provided in the revised annual development programme starting from 1974-75 for PEP, and its Executive Director has been named.

Several Population-Education Workshops have been held at the Education Extension Centre from October to December 1974, and more are being planned. Teachers, heads of educational institutions, educational administrators, and principals of teacher-training institutions were brought to these Colombo Plan assisted workshops. Curricular/teacher-training materials for classes VI-VIII on population-education have been developed and being tested by IER.

Intensive population-education in 19 thanas, a survey and a seminar form part of a World Bank assisted Population Project in the education sector. Work has already been started, and this will form part of the national PEP.

A Population-Education Task Force has already been formed which co-ordinates all activities related to population-education.

Curricula revision is imminent now in the light of national needs and aspirations, and the need for education to suit these requirements. Education Commission has strongly recommended in these lines and a national curriculum committee has been formed by the government to start this work. Educational administration structure is also reorganised to emphasise the need for rural/national development and the education's role in it.

Non-formal education: In a country where about 77 per cent of the population are outside the pale of written words, strategies and programmes are essential to provide functional mass education through non-formal ways. A Committee set up by the government has submitted its report. The Ministry of Education is also trying to develop a programme in this light. Some pilot projects are expected to start from late 1975. But a big thrust and a concerted effort are essential.

Higher education and rural development: Researches into problem areas of agriculture, rural/social/economic transformation are being taken up now by the universities and various institutes, which was hardly ever done before. Relating higher seats of learning as researches into rural problems has become a conscious policy of the UGC. Rajshahi University has set up the Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS), the Chittagong University is experimenting with its Rural Development Project (CURDP) and the Jahangirnagar University intends to set up an Institute of Rural Studies (IRS). These are all post-independence realities and could hardly be discussed fruitfully in old times. Such action-oriented/problem-oriented researches into agriculture/rural development/institutions would greatly assist the implementers and policy-makers in devising more effective policies and programmes, based on empirical research findings.

Signs are on that education's long-awaited march towards the realisation of partnership with the community has just begun. Teachers would play a significant role, and therefore, curricula for teacher education have to be carefully planned. Once the teacher is not only trained but also motivated, and he in turn can motivate a segment of the student populace, the constructive development forces that could be released by this process is tremendous, which we all hope would contribute towards removing the bondage of poverty, death, disease and hunger.

VII. NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH : THE BACKDROP AND THE NEED

In the absence of a better and precise definition, non-formal education is meant to include a wide variety of organised but out-of-school education, some of which follow time-honoured educational practices.

Without entering into the semantics of definition of non-formal education, it could be stated that the key characteristics of non-formal education are principally two:

(1) It does not form a part of the established main stream of education which is hierarchically organised in a lock-step system of three tiers of education, that is, primary, secondary and higher, leading to degrees at the university level, and is generally known as the formal system of education.

(2) Though not rigidly structured-like formal education, non-formal education stands for those types of education which nothwithstanding their widely varying characteristics in objectives, programme content, institutional arrangements, etc., follow a systematic and organised pattern. (This distinction will not be so valid where formal education is not structured as rigidly as indicated here.)

The exciting possibilities of non-formal education in Bangladesh are mainly because of the fact that the dominant segment of the population is comprised of illiterates and as a rigid framework of organised school system could not offer opportunities in making them literate in the foreseeable future. There are many options and approaches available for non-formal education which could be evolved in the light of the realities of a particular country and made relevant to the needs of its numerous and diverse clientèle groups. Let us first try to size up the dimension of the problem of non-formal education that Bangladesh is supposed to face. In a country with a population of about 75 million, it is estimated that the number of illiterates in the age-group between 11 to 45 years is about 35 million. Bangladesh is occupying one of the lowest steps in the world's scale of literacy. Apart from illiteracy, extreme poverty, high density of population, and economic backwardness have all combined to make it one of the poorest and under-developed countries of the world, where about 80 per cent of the population are estimated to be illiterates. According to the 1961 population census, the rate of literacy was 21.5 per cent which also included those who sign their names only. Persons who have attended schools beyond class VI constitute about 4.5 per cent of the population. The rate of literacy

amongst females is below 10 per cent. The drop-out rate in primary schools, where roughly above 50 per cent of the school-age children get enrolled, is extremely high and those who leave primary schools after Class V in many cases revert back to illiteracy due to a hostile environment. The continuous population explosion in the country at the rate of 3 per cent per annum adds to the increasing magnitude of the problem of raising the literacy level. Table 1 indicates that out of a population of 75 million, roughly 51 million constitute those who are out-of-school and in need of education. Illiterates in the age-group of 6 to 19 years number 20 million. Table 1 will speak for itself.

Table 1. The quantitative dimension of the task of non-formal education

Level of education	Year	Age-group population	Percentage of enrolment of age-group in school		Percentage of age-group out of school	Numbers out of school in need of education
Primary (6-10)	1974	101 023 184	(5 813 178)	58%	42%	4 210 006
Secondary (11-15)	1974	9 662 022	(1 642 584)	17%	83%	8 019 438
College (16-17)	1974	3 468 193	(225 432)	6.5%	93.5%	3 242 716
Degrees (18-19)	1974	3 351 913	(97 202)	2.9%	97.1%	3 254 711
Adult Illiterate & others (20-60)	1974	32 663 986	(489 969)	1.5%	98.5%	32 174 017
Total		59 169 298	8 268 365			50 900 933

Source: FREPD Macro Research Project based on preliminary census figures of 1974 and the First Five-Year Plan.

Of the illiterate population in Bangladesh, 85 per cent are spread out mostly in rural areas and are required to play an important role in the productive process. Drive against illiteracy, implementation of adult education and non-formal education to have a sizably higher rate of literacy in the country as a tool for the economic and national development process is made

much more difficult by the spread-over of this population in remote villages. Most of the small segment of literates and the educated live in rural areas and join the urban population, and thereby contributing towards a continuous depletion of trained manpower and an exodus of educated population from rural areas. Because of the backwardness of the rural villages and of the archaic system of production prevalent there, the growth rate of production and the linked rate of increase in employment and job opportunities are very low, leading towards the exodus of poor, uneducated and untrained villagers to cities and towns. This is creating rural-urban migration which, if continued, may lead towards an explosion as the cities could not support these migrants.

The future prosperity, both economic or otherwise, could not be achieved with 80 per cent of the population remaining within the pale of illiteracy. Modernisation of agriculture, population planning and expansion of industries and other techniques of progress could hardly be materialised without a literate population, which could gradually lead towards equalisation of opportunities and creation of more employment to support the increasing number of unemployed. The increasing number of the out-of-school youth in the rural areas is making the situation and the future task more and more complex.

It is not only the vast majority of the rural population who are illiterate; about 6 million unskilled illiterate labourers are working in mills and factories of the industrial areas. This acts as a hindrance towards better and higher production, and innovation in industries which largely depend on trained and skilled labour. It is, therefore, necessary to make serious organised attempts towards making these labourers also literate.

Apart from ensuring higher production and use of better techniques and methods in agriculture and industry, literacy could contribute towards the eradication of social ills and superstitutions. It could raise the consciousness amongst the masses about nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism and the need for the establishment of these cherished goals in our society and State.

It may be stated that without literacy no country could accelerate their pace of development. We have to look at the experiences of China, Cuba, Sri Lanka and the USSR in their literacy campaigns. In the recent past, Cuba could transform the entire illiterate population into literates

within one year. In the light of Unesco's interest in the eradication of illiteracy and adult education through various conferences organised by it and the recommendations made, we may hope that Unesco's help and assistance to Bangladesh could go a long way in these fields.

The foregoing paragraphs would indicate the enormity of the task, more so because of the fact that most of the female population in the country is illiterate. Educating the female population presents more problems than educating the male population.

Some limited attempts were made for adult education and the eradication of illiteracy in Bangladesh. The Ministry of Education organised an adult education programme in 8 thanas from 1964 on an experimental basis. The results obtained are not very encouraging. The Non-formal Education Committee's Report cites about 14 experiments in non-formal education in this country as follows:

(1) The Comilla Co-operative Experiment
(2) The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)
(3) The Rungunia Thana Co-operative Experiment
(4) Agricultural Extension Service
(5) Family Planning Programme (Ministry of Health and Family Planning)
(6) The Non-formal Education Programme of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
(7) Pilot Project on Adult Education, Ministry of Education
(8) The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) Programme
(9) Ganamilan, Gurudaspur (Rajshahi)
(10) The Programme of the Ministry of Information and Broascasting
(11) The Work Study Programme of Rajshahi University
(12) The Self-help Project of A.H. University College, Bogra
(13) The Chittagong University Rural Development Project
(14) The Dacca University Project for student participation in IRRI-20 rice cultivation

Almost all of them are experimental in nature and some of them have begun very recently. Out of these, IRDP, BRAC and Ganamilan emphasize non-formal education for the female population also.

An attempt will be made in the following paragraphs to indicate the non-formal education and training processes adopted in the major rural development programmes, the goals of which are to raise the production and contribute towards the overall rural development including the reduction of illiteracy.

VIII. PROPOSALS FOR INSTITUTIONALISATION OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

In the light of the enormity of the task of eradication of illiteracy, the motivation of the entire population towards higher production, the achievement of national goals and the infusion in them of a higher order of national unity, it is necessary to develop a strategy on non-formal education leading to development of a series of multi-sectoral and community action programmes. The following suggestions made by the Non-Formal Education Committee deserve serious consideration:

- The enormity of the task in non-formal education and the diversity of the clientèle groups, their needs and interest underscore the imperative need for decentralisation in planning and implementing the programme of non-formal education and the establishment of priorities in meeting the needs in this critical area of education and development.

- In order to promote the planned development of non-formal education on sound lines in realising the national objectives, and also to avoid the ineffective use of the limited resources through fragmentary and often parallel activities in serving the same clientèle groups, an adequate machinery for the formulation of policy guidelines at the national level and the co-ordination of activities in the field of non-formal education and development at various levels is of paramount national importance.

- If non-formal education is to serve as an aid to development, and in particular, in solving the problems of mass poverty and mass unemployment which are at the centre of development, the planning of non-formal education needs to be approached as a part of the integrated programme of development at the local and regional levels.

- The realities of Bangladesh render it absolutely necessary that the operational units at the local level are so planned and developed as to be economically viable, and that the stress is laid on self-reliance in projected development and financing.

- The development of non-formal education as a function of a multi-sectoral rather than a uni-sectoral programme appears to be more cost-effective.

- In planning the non-formal education programmes including the delivery system and the training of personnel, the maximum possible use should be made of the existing institutions and locally available resources, both human and material.

- The deficiencies observed in the operation of some of the major on-going programmes indicate the need for the development of low cost media and an adequate supply of educational software.

- The staff development including the recruitment and training of additional personnel at the village level is an important need in Bangladesh.

- In order to support the non-formal education programme with an adequate system of incentives, it is necessary not only to link non-formal education to productive work but also include in it elements in the formal, general, social, economic and political education to stimulate and sustain continuous efforts for improving the quality of life.

- The stagnation and de-generation of many of the on-going programmes highlight the crucial role of research and evaluation in ensuring a continuous renewal and regeneration of the programme of education by updating present knowledge and skills, and also generating new knowledge and skills in order to accelerate the pace of development.

The enormity of the problems in non-formal education makes it imperative that sufficient emphasis is given to decentralisation in planning, financing, implementation and supervision of the non-formal education programmes.

While approaching the entire illiterate population, with the diversity and complexity of their needs, any approach in non-formal education has to gear their programme to the life needs of the clientèle. The following target groups could perhaps be approached on a priority basis:

(1) Farmers and farm labourers (mostly landless).
(2) Weavers.
(3) Fishermen.
(4) Artisans - carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, etc.
(5) Out-of-school youths.
(6) Women.

The problem of organising effective non-formal education programme underlines the necessity to set up a highly-effective and responsive machinery at national and other levels, and desire an organisation set-up adequate to the need. With two-thirds of the population still illiterate, the entire resources have to be mobilised not only to reduce the high cost involved but also to telescope the time span required for the achievement of a literate population in Bangladesh. To ensure an effective non-formal education approach, involvement from the highest level to the grass roots is essential. Non-formal education has to be made an important part of the

national integrated development which can take place only if it is spread downwards, and if it is prelocated to the higher echelons of national governmental decision-making process. A literacy campaign with definite goals, time schedule, financing and implementing mechanism has to be mounted. Optimum utilisation of the existing national resources including the institutions of formal education has to be ensured. Special programmes have to be devised for the out-of-school youth and the women.

For an effective non-formal education programme, community participation and involvement of local community leaders are imperative, without which it would be extremely difficult to achieve any sizable result. The community must realise and evolve for them an action programme, based on flexible and dynamic national guidelines which could be planned, mounted and supervised by them.

Training of core personnel through short-term courses, staff development and recruitment of key personnel for various levels are necessary for mounting a massive national programme.

Most of these and some more have been listed and explained in the Non-Formal Education Committee Report which is being examined by the government for evolving of a national programme on non-formal education.

IX. PLANNING FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION : RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) As the problem is multi-sectoral, a high powered National Council on Non-Formal Education needs to be set up with representation from the highest level and drafting of national experts. This Council would have to operate through a series of committees at the district, sub-district and thana levels, and gradually gravitate towards the operational areas of the unions and villages. Community leaders interested in NFE have to be identified and organised through local committees with responsibilities of implementing these programmes including financial and other resource mobilisation.

(2) A large number of personnel would have to be recruited not only on the basis of academic qualifications but also on their involvement in such a programme. They have to be trained, motivated and provided the required assistance by the government and the local community.

(3) The formal educational institutions could play a big role in the achievement of non-formal education goals and objectives. A non-formal education centre could be established in each primary, secondary and higher secondary schools and colleges with the target of one centre for each village.

(4) The problem of the female illiterates should be appreciated adequately and as far as possible, female teachers should be appointed for them.

(5) The proposed Academy for Fundamental Education would have a wing for non-formal education, looking after teacher training of administrators on non-formal education preparation of books, charts, manuals, pamphlets, research and evaluation, etc., relating to non-formal education.

(6) Annual conferences might be organised for reviewing the progress of the programmes and ensuing their required adjustments.

(7) Primary education system could play a major role in a drive against illiteracy. The government is setting up a Bureau of Fundamental Education to look after primary education as well as non-formal education because through the 37,000 primary schools and their 160,000 teachers, the system could provide a major development tool for achieving non-formal education objectives.

(8) Radio, television and newspapers, etc. could play an important role in non-formal education.

(9) Co-operatives, industrial establishment, trade unions, voluntary organisations, women associations, etc. could also play a significant role in the literacy campaign.

We have indicated some of the possible approaches and have also emphasized that a total national commitment from the highest level to the grass roots is essential for the success of such a programme if national multi-sectoral programmes could be mounted. It might be possible to ensure from the formal school system that before being employed or obtaining any certificate, diploma or degree, each one of the students/examinees/applicants would have to work in the national literacy campaign for at least three months. The entire teaching community from the primary level up to the university could take a short course in mass education programmes and participate in the eradication of illiteracy, along with the student community. Holidays and long vacations could be fully utilised for such purposes. All industrial establishments and government offices could participate in the programme and the head of the organization could be made responsible for converting illiterates in their establishments within a year. All educated persons could be mobilised to participate in the illiteracy programme.

These are some of the possibilities which could be considered in making a national non-formal education drive education through various approaches. Its success would depend on the degree of national involvement,

the seriousness of the purpose at various levels including the highest level, and the level of motivation the programme could generate. While it is one of the most difficult tasks to be achieved in the Bangladesh Mass Literacy Programme is a must if the nation has to conquer its abysmal poverty, widespread diseases, hunger and backwardness, and continue its march towards a better and prosperous future.

X. ORGANISING FOR FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION IN RURAL BANGLADESH - ESTABLISHMENT OF A BUREAU OF FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION

The desirability of expanding the opportunities provided for functional elementary education is beyond doubt, but the form that education should take, the way it should be provided, and the efficiency and effectiveness of the present system of primary education is open to much debate. In a country with few resources and the vast majority of its population illiterate and unskilled, a few years of basic education are all that can be provided for most people for the foreseeable future. Accepting that such education will be terminal for the majority, it must be relevant and functional. The existing primary education system of Bangladesh fails, however, to reflect these realities; it does not even meet the outdated objective of providing a reasonable, academic preparation for secondary education and/or clerical duties.

Primary education is already a massive undertaking with more than 37,000 recognised schools, 156,000 teachers and a recurrent budget now amounting to Takas 48 crore per year, quite apart from substantial development expenditures. This alone makes primary education perhaps the largest single undertaking within the entire government establishment. Enrolment in primary schools is reported to be almost 78 lakhs, or 73 per cent of the estimated child population of primary school age. The statistics are impressive, but the reality is less than satisfactory.

Many of the schools are 'undeveloped', and many of those taken up for development in the sixties remain as incomplete shells. Worst still, more than half of the primary teachers presently in service are professionally untrained. With regard to enrolment, such statistics are never entirely reliable and even a casual observation suggests that these figures grossly over-estimate the numbers of children actually attending school. Of those who do enter school in class I, 50 per cent drop out before reaching class III and only 25 per cent ever complete the basic 5-year primary cycle. Taking the most optimistic figures, three-quarters of the children of Bangladesh

either never enter school or drop out before attaining any useful or lasting standard of literacy or numeracy, practical knowledge or skills. Even for the few who do complete primary school, the 'education' received is of questionable value for either their own lives or that of the wider community, except as a means of proceeding to high school - which many of them will have no opportunity to do.

This deplorable situation results from the irrelevance of the curriculum to local needs and interests, and the poor quality of teaching in the schools. These basic inadequacies are further aggravated by a lack of good teaching aids and textbooks, and a general failure to tailor the delivery system - the primary school classes - to local necessities of the seasons and daily work schedules. Apart from the absence of any mechanism for the systematic development of curricula and teaching materials - a lack affecting all levels of school education - there are no arrangements for the professional training of PTI instructors or school inspecting officers. These personnel are recruited from amongst the TTC graduates whose basic orientation has been towards secondary school teaching and who have, in most cases, no substantial teaching experience. The primary school teachers themselves receive, if they are lucky, only one year of training after matriculation and are then left to teach for 20-30 years in isolated primary schools without further guidance or refresher training.

Briefly, there has been a failure over the years to recognise the vital importance of primary education and to give due priority and attention to its development. This is a result of the - perhaps inevitable - tendency for any organization or institution entrusted with responsibility for various levels of education to concentrate on the higher (more prestigious and more sensitive) levels of education to the detriment of the lowest level.

Even if efforts to remove these inadequacies are successful it is unlikely that - due to scarcity of resources - the present system of primary education can ever be expanded to meet the basic education needs of the country's rapidly expanding (predominantly rural) population. While pursuing efforts to improve and expand the present system in the next few years, investigations and experimentation must therefore be made into ways of providing relevant 'fundamental' education to greater numbers at lower unit cost. The existing system and its personnel must be prepared for adaptations of methods, functions and roles which, although introduced in a phased manner, must in the end be quite substantial.

For the vast numbers of out-of-school children and youth, there are at present hardly any opportunities for a 'second chance' either as part-time or full-time students in adolescence or later life within the organised educational system. Considerable international attention is now being focussed on 'non-formal' education as a means of providing such necessary opportunities. The Education Commission has advocated the development of non-formal education programmes (although it has not been suggested now, or what nature such education should take) and the Planning Commission had constituted a committee to examine the matter. The Committee has submitted its report. At present, however, there is no body within the establishment of the Ministry of Education - or any other part of the government - to give proper attention to these matters. Even the existing Adult Literacy Programme of the Education Directorate is almost forgotten (it is also traditional in its nature and approach, and, after a decade, still insufficiently evaluated).

In the broad context of the developmental needs of the country, the primary schools - situated as they are in almost every village - are in a unique position to act as centres not only for non-formal education programmes but also for all developmental activities within the communities they serve. Similarly the primary teachers represent an already existing cadre - 156,000 strong - with enormous potential for acting as change-agents, or at least as sources of useful information, within each and every village. If this potential is to be tapped, the concept of the role of the primary school and its staff has to be revised and revitalised.

It is unlikely that the urgently needed improvements in formal primary education can be achieved within the present educational organisational structure. Additionally, it will be impossible either to develop the necessary link between the primary schools and the projected non-formal education activities or to revitalise the primary schools (as suggested above) so long as responsibility for primary education remains combined with that for formal higher education. A separate Bureau for Fundamental Education with overall responsibility for both primary and non-formal education, is being established soon.

The Bureau will be responsible for organising primary and non-formal education programmes through District Fundamental Education Authorities (DFEAs), and for directly organising appropriate teacher training, inspection and other necessary services. The Bureau will be headed by a Director, having the rank and status of Joint Secretary in the Ministry, and Deputy Directors in charge of each of the four major divisions of the Bureau as follows:

(i) Programming and Evaluation (Primary schools).

(ii) Programming and Evaluation (Non-formal education).

(iii) Training and Inspection.

(iv) Finance and Administration.

An Academy for Fundamental Education will be established to provide pre- and in-service training for PTI instructors and primary school inspectors, and to promote refresher training of primary school teachers at thana level. The Academy will be attached to the Bureau and its Director has the rank and status of a Deputy Director of the Bureau.

District/Fundamental Education Authorities (DFEAs) will be constituted within each district comprising representatives of the local educationists, teachers associations and District Co-ordination Committee, together with other departmental officers and eminent local persons. The Director of Fundamental Education will appoint the chairman of the authorities. The Bureau will also appoint a District Inspector of Primary Schools and a District Organiser of Non-Formal Education who will serve as officers and ex-officio members of the DFEAs. The DFEAs will be responsible within the limits and guidelines laid down by the Bureau, for the establishment/recognition of schools, the appointment of teachers, and the development and equipping of schools. The authorities will also organise examinations for the schools within their districts.

The Bureau will establish basic guidelines and standards to be observed by the DFEAs, and will disburse grants to them. The Bureau will have the right to inspect schools and audit the accounts of the authorities. The Bureau will directly control and administer the PTIs and assist the DFEAs in organising refresher courses for in-service teachers.

Preliminary suggestions for the organisational structure for the Bureau are appended. The Bureau will be established operationally in 1975 following the bifurcation of the DPI Office - the primary education division of the DPI, together with a new wing for non-formal education, will form the nucleus of the Bureau. It is proposed to appoint a Director for the Bureau very soon - together with a small supporting staff - to finalise detailed proposals, staff requirements and budgets for the Bureau.

As the problem is multi-dimensional, attack on it has, perforce, to be multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional. A committed, integrated approach linking education with developmental efforts is essential, as functional literacy and/or basic education is a sine qua now for accelerating rural development.

A diversity of problems - motivational, organisational, financial and curricular - are there, but these can be overcome through a dedicated effort. The foregoing paragraphs point out that 50 million persons from the 6-60 age-group, are in need of some education and are out of school. These 50 million are out of a total population of about 75 million. A recent World Bank Sector Working Paper on Education states that the number of illiterates in developing countries around the world would increase to 865 million by 1985. The share of Bangladesh, if the present trend continues, would rise substantially from the present 50 million. Concerted action is called for and the time is now.